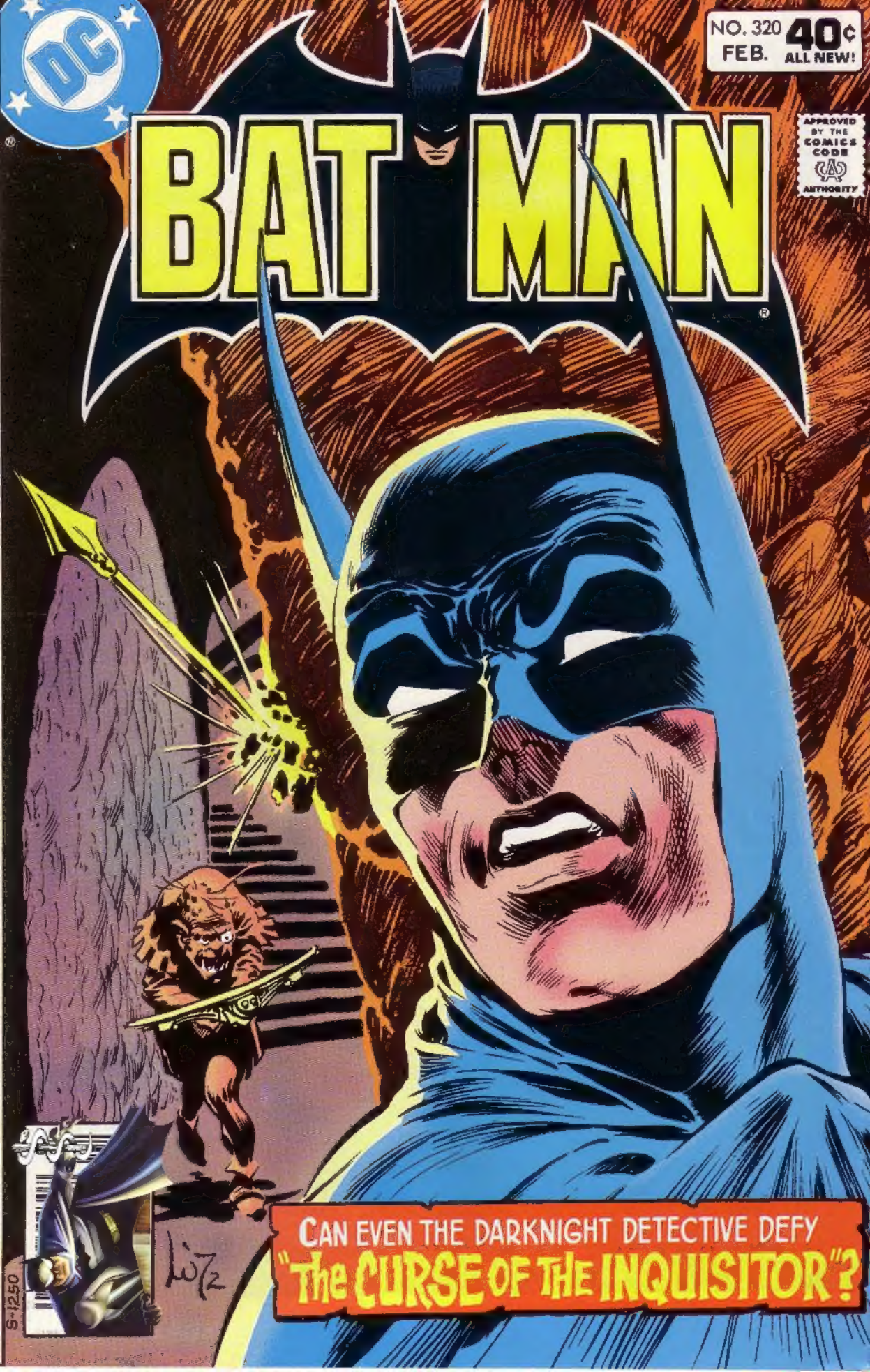
DC
NO. 320
FEB.
40¢
ALL NEW!
BAT MAN
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
CAN EVEN THE DARKNIGHT DETECTIVE DEFY
"The CURSE OF THE INQUISITOR"?
S-1250

ORPHANED AS A CHILD WHEN HIS PARENTS WERE MURDERED BEFORE HIS EYES, BRUCE WAYNE HAS TRAINED HIMSELF TO WAGE RELENTLESS WAR AGAINST CRIME AS THE DREAD AVENGER OF THE NIGHT...
BAT MAN
CREATED BY BOB KANE
IT IS AN ADVENTURE THAT WILL TAKE HIM INTO A FOREIGN LAND--AND INTO THE DARKEST CORNERS OF A MAN'S SOUL! IT WILL BE ONE OF THE MOST BIZARRE EXPLOITS OF HIS STRANGE CAREER...EXOTIC, MYSTERIOUS, AND DEADLY!
SIGERSON, LTD.
YET, FOR THE BATMAN, IT BEGINS HERE, IN AN ORDINARY OFFICE BUILDING SOMEWHERE IN DOWNTOWN GOTHAM CITY AS A MAILMAN SAYS CONVERSATIONALLY:
YOU EVER SEE THIS SIGERSON FELLA?
SURE AIN'T! HECK FIRE, HE BEEN RENTIN' THAT OFFICE FOR YEARS AND NOT ONCE HE SHOW UP!
A PAINFULLY ORDINARY BEGINNING FOR A TORTURED EXCURSION...INTO THE BLEAKEST BYWAYS OF CRIME HE WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER AS--
The CURSE of the INQUISITOR!
DENNY O'NEIL - WRITER
IRV NOVICK AND BOB SMITH - ARTISTS
BEN ODA - LETTERER
GLYNIS WEIN - COLORIST
PAUL LEVITZ - EDITOR
J-6269

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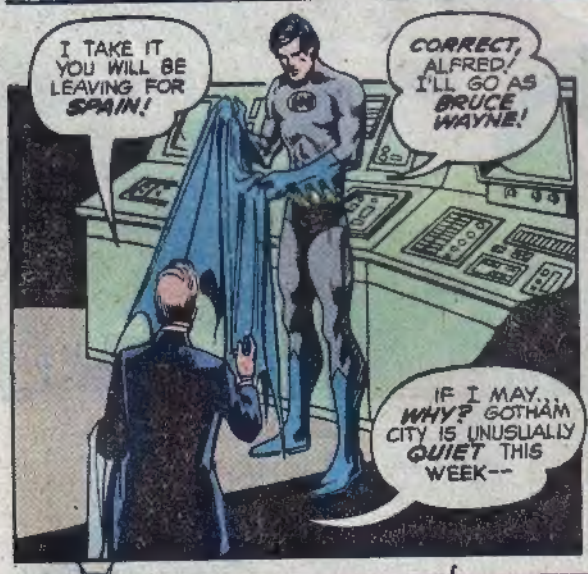
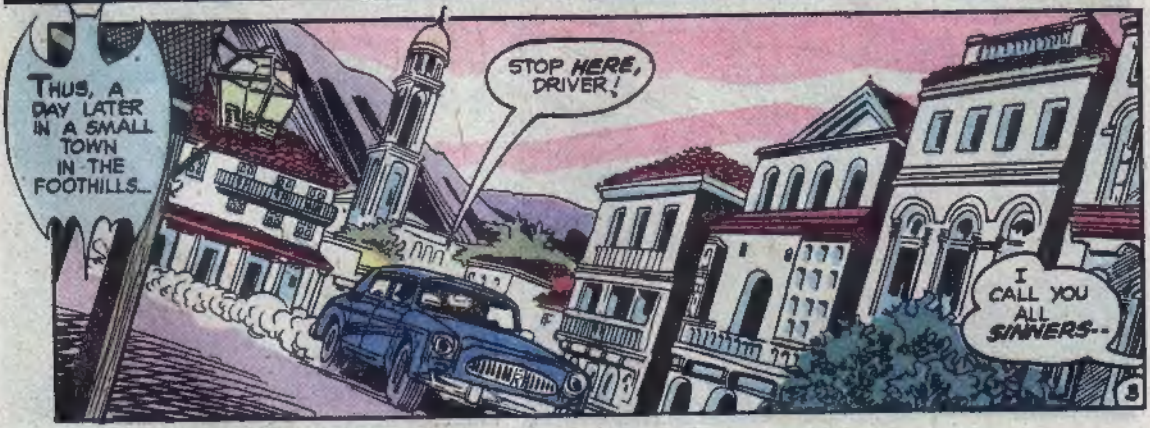
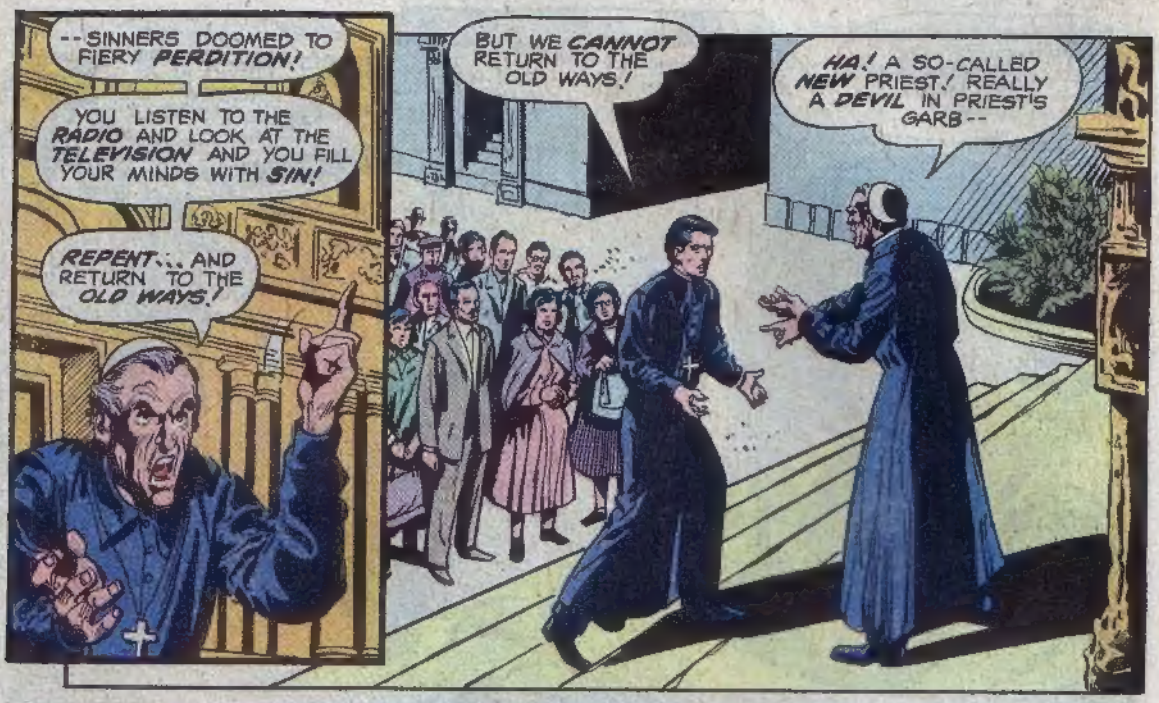
SILENT AS SMOKE, A NIGHT-CLAD FIGURE SLIPS INTO THE EMPTY ROOM, GRABS THE ENVELOPE AND, WITH AN ALMOST INHUMAN GRACE, MELTS INTO THE TWILIGHT...
SHORTLY...
WAS YOUR VISIT TO MR. SIGERSON'S PREMISES FRUITFUL, MASTER BRUCE?
I'LL TELL YOU IN A MINUTE, ALFRED!
I CONFESS I DON'T UNDERSTAND THE NEED FOR MAINTAINING SIGERSON'S OFFICE!
ZIP!
SIMPLE! I HAVE CLIPPING SERVICES ALL OVER THE WORLD SEND ME NEWS STORIES OF CRIMES!
IT WOULD LOOK STRANGE FOR MILLIONAIRE BRUCE WAYNE TO BE GETTING THEM--
--BUT NOT FOR THE UNSEEN SIGERSON, EH?
CORRECT!
ANYTHING INTERESTING IN THE LATEST BATCH?
2

EXTRAORDINARILY INTERESTING! TWO MEN WERE MURDERED IN A RURAL DISTRICT IN SPAIN!
BOTH WERE PRIESTS AND BOTH DIED HIDEOUSLY..
--ONE WAS COVERED IN BRONZE--
--AND THE SECOND WAS FOUND IN A FROZEN MEAT LOCKER!


I TAKE IT YOU WILL BE LEAVING FOR SPAIN!
CORRECT, ALFRED! I'LL GO AS BRUCE WAYNE!
IF I MAY... WHY? GOTHAM CITY IS UNUSUALLY QUIET THIS WEEK--

--WHY DON'T YOU SIMPLY REST?
I WISH I COULD, ALFRED! WITH ALL MY HEART... I ONLY WISH I COULD!


THUS, A DAY LATER IN A SMALL TOWN IN THE FOOTHILLS...
STOP HERE, DRIVER!
I CALL YOU ALL SINNERS--
3


--SINNERS DOOMED TO FIERY PERDITION!
YOU LISTEN TO THE RADIO AND LOOK AT THE TELEVISION AND YOU FILL YOUR MINDS WITH SIN!
REPENT... AND RETURN TO THE OLD WAYS!
BUT WE CANNOT RETURN TO THE OLD WAYS!
HA! A SO-CALLED NEW PRIEST! REALLY A DEVIL IN PRIEST'S GARB--

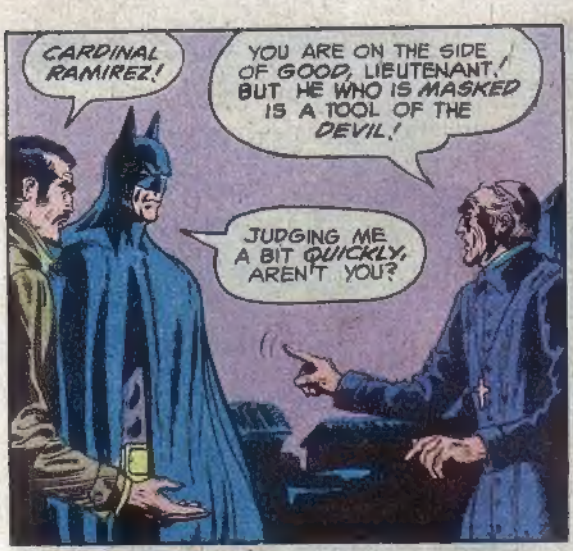
--AN EVIL SHEPHERD LEADING HIS FLOCK INTO THE MIRE!
WHO ARE THEY?
THE OLD MAN IS CARDINAL RAMIREZ... THE MOST RESPECTED MAN IN THE REGION FOR FORTY YEARS!
THE YOUNGER IS FATHER PINTO--

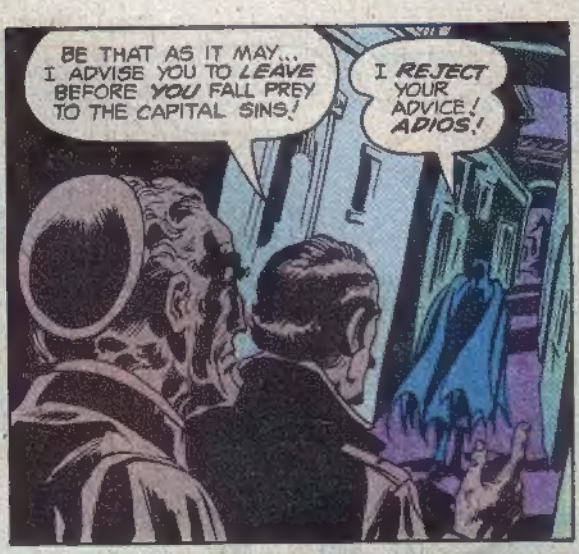
--AND AS YOU CAN SEE, THERE IS NO LOVE BETWEEN THEM!
WE CANNOT TURN BACK THE CLOCK!
THE FALSE LOGIC OF A BETRAYER!
GO, FATHER PINTO--GO AND PRAY FOR YOUR IMMORTAL SOUL!

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

AS DARKNESS CLOAKS THE MOUNTAINS...
THERE'S THE PRIEST'S RESIDENCE... AND THAT LOOKS LIKE FATHER PINTO IN HIS ROOM-- PROBABLY READING HIS BREVIARY!
EH--? I HEARD SOMEONE MOVING IN THE SHADOWS ...SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T WANT TO BE SEEN!
ZUNG!
A CROSSBOW BOLT!
I CAN HEAR HIM RUNNING! HE'S TURNED THAT CORNER!
WHOEVER HE IS, HE'S FAST--
--BUT I'M FASTER...
PLEASE DO NOT MOVE, SEÑOR.!
NO MAN ALIVE COULD SQUEEZE A TRIGGER BEFORE...
5

YOU ARE SLOW, AMIGO-- PAINFULLY SLOW!
YOU SHOULD NOT INTERFERE!
IT IS YOU WHO IS INTERFERING!
--OR WAS INTERFERING!
MAY I REACH INTO MY POCKET?
DO IT SLOWLY!
I AM LIEUTENANT HECTOR SANCHEZ-- CHIEF OF DETECTIVES! AND YOU ARE THE AMERICAN BATMAN?
POLICIA
SORRY I HIT YOU, LIEUTENANT, BUT I DO NOT LIKE GUNS POINTED AT ME!
WE DO NOT LIKE FOREIGNERS GETTING IN THE WAY OF OUR WORK!
WHAT WORK?
WE ARE KEEPING WATCH OVER FATHER PINTO! WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE A MURDERER MAY BE AFTER HIM!
OUR MISSIONS ARE THEN IDENTICAL!
THIS I DOUBT!


CARDINAL RAMIREZ!
YOU ARE ON THE SIDE OF GOOD, LIEUTENANT, BUT HE WHO IS MASKED IS A TOOL OF THE DEVIL!
JUDGING ME A BIT QUICKLY, AREN'T YOU?

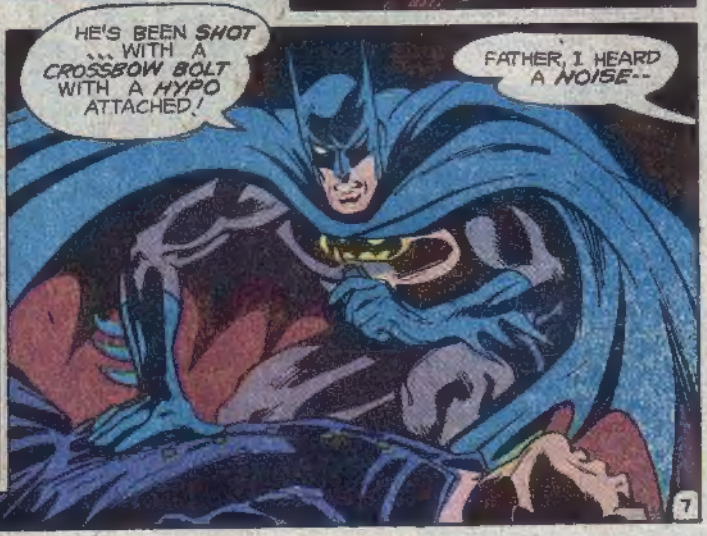

BE THAT AS IT MAY... I ADVISE YOU TO LEAVE BEFORE YOU FALL PREY TO THE CAPITAL SINS!
I REJECT YOUR ADVICE! ADIOS!

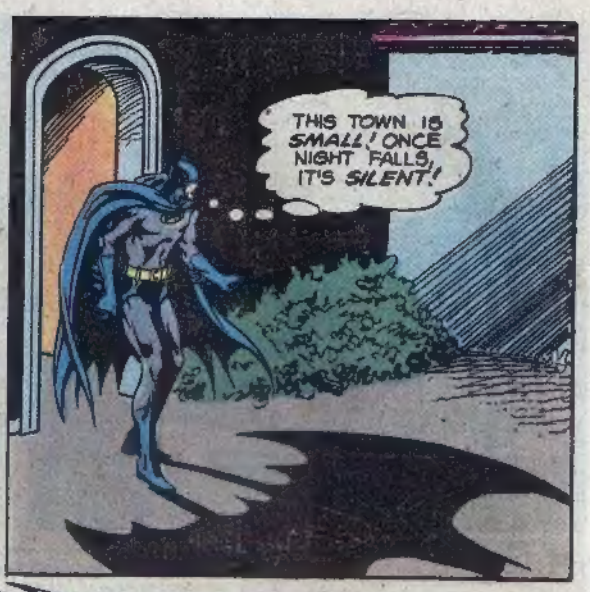
SOON...
GOOD EVENING, FATHER!
EH--? YOU ARE--

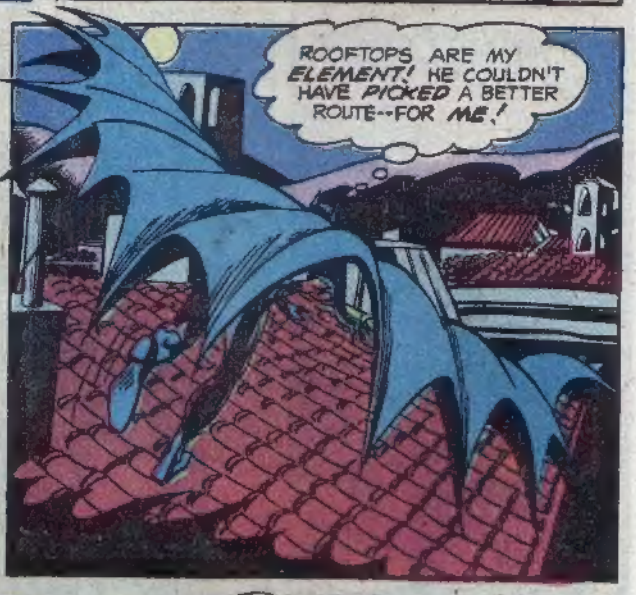
I AM CALLED THE BATMAN AND I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS!
I AM HERE TO SERVE!

-YOUR FELLOW PRIESTS--THOSE WHO WERE SLAIN! DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA OF THE KILLER'S IDENTITY?
I HESITATE TO MAKE AN ACCUSATION! BUT, YES... I HAVE CAUSE TO THINK I KNOW THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE!

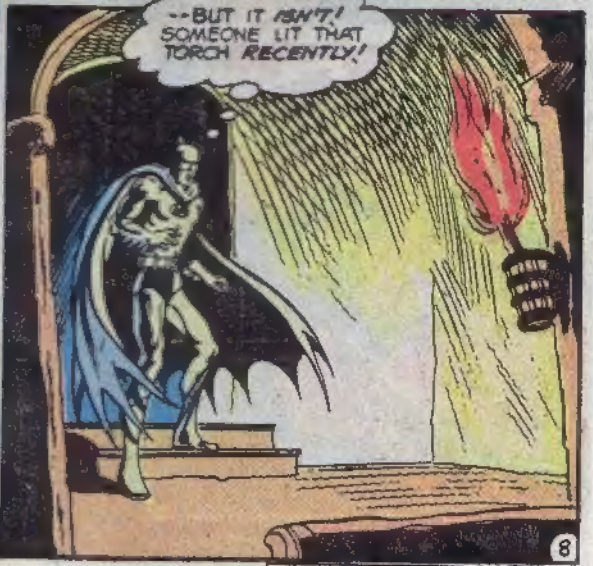
IF I WERE A POLICEMAN, I WOULD SEEK--
UAGGH!
ZING!


HE'S BEEN SHOT ... WITH A CROSSBOW BOLT WITH A HYPO ATTACHED!
FATHER, I HEARD A NOISE--





TWENTY-FIVE HARD-RUN MINUTES LATER, THE BATMAN FINDS HIMSELF AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN WHERE...
HE VANISHED INTO THAT OLD CHAPEL! IT LOOKS DESERTED--



CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.

HALLO! ANYONE HERE?
AS THE BATMAN CALLS OUT, A GROTESQUE FIGURE RISES SILENTLY FROM A HIDDEN CHAMBER BENEATH THE FLOOR--
--AND...
T-ZANGG!
THAT'S THE SECOND SHOT YOU'VE TAKEN AT ME TONIGHT!
THIS TIME YOU MISSED BECAUSE THE TORCH FLICKERED WHEN YOU OPENED THE TRAPDOOR... FROM THE BREEZE OUTSIDE!
IT GAVE ME JUST ENOUGH WARNING!
THE QUESTION IS... WHY TRY TO KILL ME?
I CAN ANSWER YOU, AMERICAN!
I DON'T BELIEVE WE'VE BEEN INTRODUCED!
I SUPPOSE YOU MAY CALL ME THE INQUISITOR!
LIKE THE INQUISITORS IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY, I AM DEDICATED TO ERADICATING SIN!

BY MURDERING PRIESTS?
AS A START... YES! IT IS OBSCENE, THE THINGS THESE YOUNG CLERICS PREACH!
ONCE THE PEOPLE LEARN THAT THEY CANNOT SPEW HERESY, DECENCY MAY AGAIN PREVAIL.
AS THE BATMAN ADVANCES, THE INQUISITOR TOUCHES A LEVER--
--CAUSING A COUNTER-WEIGHTED SECTION OF THE FLOOR TO DROP--
ARE YOU AWARE OF HOW YOU SOUND? HOW UTTERLY INSANE?
INSANE? WERE THOSE WHO USED THIS CHAPEL IN THE 15TH CENTURY INSANE?
--AND THE BATMAN TO PLUNGE INTO A SPIKE-BOTTOMED OUBLIETTE!
I HAVE ONLY A FRACTION OF A SECOND TO STOP MYSELF!
BOOTS AND GLOVES... ALONG THE WALLS! THE FRICTION SHOULD--
--BRAKE ME!
VERY INGENIOUS, AMERICAN!

CONTINUED ON 4TH PAGE FOLLOWING

HOWEVER, YOU HAVE MERELY POSTPONED YOUR DEATH! MY AID GORKO HAS HIS CROSSBOW!
THERE, IN THE OUBLIETTE, YOU HAVE NO ROOM TO DODGE!
GORKO MAY MISS ONCE... OR TWICE--
--BUT SOONER OR LATER HIS AIM WILL BE TRUE!
FAREWELL!
I HATE TO DISTURB THE DEAD--
--BUT UNLESS I DO, I'LL JOIN HIM!
GOT TO MAKE THIS THROW!
--PERFECT!

HE PROBABLY ISN'T BADLY HURT! BUT HE SHOULD STAY UNCONSCIOUS FOR A MINUTE--
--WHICH IS ALL I NEED TO CLIMB OUT!
I'LL DEAL WITH HIM LATER--
--AFTER I VISIT THE LOCAL POLICE STATION!
SOON...
I SUPPOSE THERE IS NO HARM IN TELLING YOU WHAT THE MEDICAL EXAMINER DISCOVERED ABOUT THE DEATH OF FATHER PINTO!
HE WAS KILLED BY A DRUG--
BUT HOW DID YOU KNOW...
NEVER MIND! I'VE GOT TO SEE LIEUTENANT SANCHEZ!
POLICIA
HE IS NOT IN H.S OFFICE!
THEN TELL ME WHERE THE NEAREST BANK IS... AND FAST!
12

IT IS A MERE FOUR KILOMETERS AWAY, WHERE--
WHY DID YOU BRING ME HERE, LIEUTENANT?
BANCO DE
THE BANK IS CLOSED UNTIL MONDAY...
AS THE HIGHEST RANKING OFFICER IN THE DISTRICT, I HAVE KEYS, FATHER GUEDES!
I WOULD LIKE YOU TO STEP INTO THE VAULT!
WHY?
BECAUSE I WILL SHOOT YOU WHERE YOU STAND IF YOU DO NOT!
WHY HAVE YOU PUT ON A MONK'S ROBE?
NOT THE ROBE OF A MONK... THE ROBE OF AN INQUISITOR!
AS YOU SAID, THE BANK IS CLOSED UNTIL MONDAY! BY THEN YOU WILL HAVE SUFFOCATED!
NOT IF I RELEASE HIM!

CONTINUED ON 4TH PAGE FOLLOWING.

YOU! THE BATMAN!
YOU GAVE YOURSELF AWAY, LIEUTENANT SANCHEZ!
OUTSIDE FATHER PINTO'S RESIDENCE YOU MENTIONED FALLING PREY TO CAPITAL SINS!
THAT WAS YOUR THEME, WASN'T IT?... THE SEVEN CAPITAL SINS! PRIDE, GREED, LUST, GLUTTONY, ENVY, ANGER AND SLOTH--
"FOR PRIDE YOU COVERED YOUR VICTIM IN BRONZE... LIKE A TROPHY ONE WOULD BE PROUD OF!
"NEXT, YOU FROZE SOMEONE IN A FOOD LOCKER TO CORRESPOND WITH GLUTTONY!"
FATHER PINTO YOU KILLED WITH A DRUG WHICH DESTROYED THE NERVOUS SYSTEM... A DRUG WHICH MAKES A MAN RESEMBLE SOMEONE VERY LAZY--OR SLOTHFUL!
BLAM!
YOU PLANNED TO MURDER FATHER GUEDES IN A BANK... WHERE MEN SHOW GREED!
14

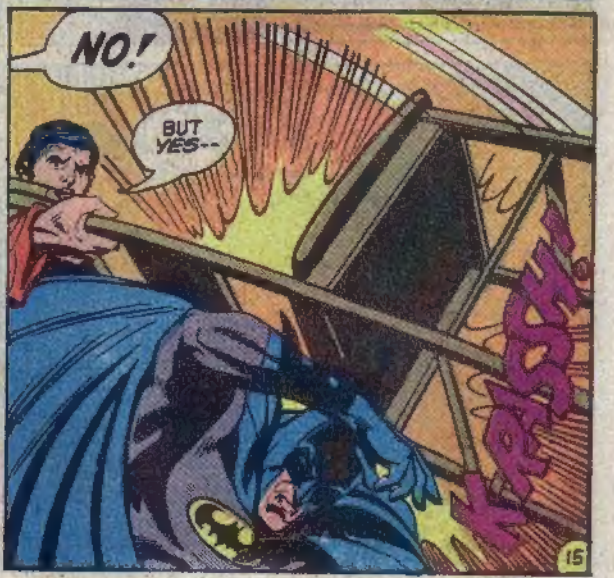
I PUT IT ALL TOGETHER A FEW MINUTES AGO AND I KNEW WHO YOU HAD TO BE...AND WHERE!
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM!

THE GUN'S EMPTY! YOU'RE FINISHED!
NO!

I SHALL KILL YOU WITH MY BARE HANDS!
I DOUBT IT, LIEUTENANT!

I DOUBT IT VERY MUCH!

YOU MUST NOT FIGHT LIKE BEASTS!
GET OUT OF THE WAY, FATHER--

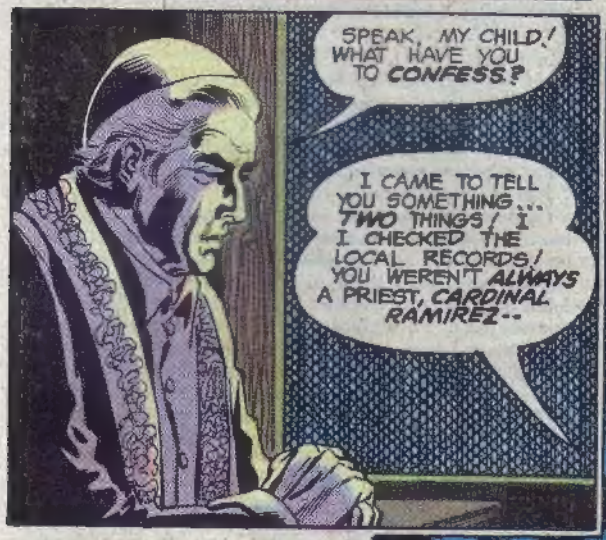

NO!
BUT YES--
KRASH!

--I WILL CRUSH ANY WHO STAND BETWEEN ME AND MY HOLY CAUSE!
STEP ASIDE!
I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE FAKING! BUT YOU'RE NOT! YOU ACTUALLY BELIEVE WHAT YOU SAY!
YOUR SOUL IS POISONED!
YOU DARE NOT--
AAGHH
M-MASTER... I THOUGHT TO SHOOT THE FOREIGNER!
LEAVE US, PLEASE!
16

CONCLUDED ON 3rd PAGE FOLLOWING

I WILL HEAR YOUR LAST CONFESSION NOW!

NIGHT ENDS AND, AS THE FIRST RAYS OF WHAT PROMISES TO BE A LOVELY DAY LIGHTENS THE COUNTRYSIDE...
I WILL HEAR YOUR CONFESSION NOW!


SPEAK, MY CHILD! WHAT HAVE YOU TO CONFESS?
I CAME TO TELL YOU SOMETHING... TWO THINGS! I I CHECKED THE LOCAL RECORDS! YOU WEREN'T ALWAYS A PRIEST, CARDINAL RAMIREZ--

--ONCE YOU HAD A SON! HE BECAME A POLICEMAN AFTER HE CHANGED HIS NAME... TO HECTOR SANCHEZ!
YES, YES... IT IS TRUE! AND THE SECOND THING?

JUST A QUOTATION FROM THE BIBLE--
"LET HE WHO IS WITHOUT SIN CAST THE FIRST STONE!"
END

THE Joker
Cordially invites YOU to his Birthday Party!
R.S.V.P. care of the guest of honor—
BATMAN
the place: RIGHT HERE!
the time: DECEMBER 6TH!

Dear Paul, Len and Irv:

BATMAN #315's "Danger on the Wing" was an unusual tale that evoked mixed feelings in me. If it hadn't been for one thing the story would have been perfect. What thing was that? The villain, Kite-Man.

Unlike Calendar Man's revival three issues previous,this one fell on its face. With Calendar Man there was a lot you could do with the character. Changing his gimmick from seasons to days of the week, for instance, and make him immensely more powerful. On the other hand, Kite-Man was—and always will be—a nerd. His power is too limiting. Too susceptible to a gust of wind. Look, it took Batman all of *BATMAN* #312 trying to nail Cal Man and he nearly got himself killed in the process. He was battling a foe worthy of his mettle. Now consider Kite-Man. It took the Caped Crusader two—count 'em, two—pages to land (literally) KM. He was about as threatening to Batman as the Prankster is to Superman—and just as weak. I hope he is permanently retired.

I said that this story would have been perfect without Kite-Man and I meant it. In terms of characterization and sub-plots, it was the best issue in years—and that's saying a lot. A better title for this issue would have been, "A Day in the Life of..." This story had the feel of an episode of "Adam-12" or "Dragnet".

Lucius Fox is perhaps the best supporting character to come along in years—in *any* comic. His strength lies in the fact that he is so realistic. Here is a man (a financial advisor, yet) who enjoys a good relationship with his boss, but has so many problems at home. He has so many of the traits that have made Alfred such an endearing character, the most outstanding of which is his loyalty. He is willing to put his own head on a platter to help his employer. As his plan to solve the Gregorian Falstaff so amply displays.

In recent months, we readers have been exposed to the subtle workings of the real-life business world. SUPERMAN has attacked the madness of television and the ratings race. Now BATMAN is putting big-business on parade. Gregorian Falstaff may or may not be a parody of Howard Hughes, but he nicely typifies the businessman: ruthless and powerful. The bit about "stealing" employees really happens in the everyday world. The reference to 'Trans-Atlantic Airways' leaving Gotham seems strangely reminiscent of a true occurrence that happened in New York City just last year. And who says relevance (however subtle) is dead? Certainly not I.

On to other matters. I had to cheer when Selina threw the drink into Bruce's face. I really don't think that he had the right to investigate her. True, she had once been the Catwoman, but a dossier wouldn't prove whether she had reformed or not. If she had it could say she had, but if she hadn't, she is (or rather, was) a sly enough criminal to fake facts for the purposes of a fact-gatherer. The whole investigation would be useless.

The look into the nightwork of The Batman was interesting. The notable fact was that Batman doesn't distinguish between criminals. A crime is a crime. Regardless of the grandeur, all are worthy of his attention. Batman is rather unique among heroes. Most heroes, like Superman would feel that they were betraying their public, if they gave up their costumes. But Batman feels that he would be betraying himself. Thus he is compelled to not just fight crime, but to destroy every facet of it. Batman is similar to The Riddler, in that he is psychologically compelled to fight crime just as Riddler is compelled to give clues to his capers.

This issue was special in more ways than one. We need more stories like this one that spotlights the supporting characters and the main hero doing "everyday" things. These stories "un-deifies" heroes and humanizes them. More; I say.

How about it?

Robert Sallion
999 High Street
Port Chester, NY 10573

P.S. Love the new Bat-Signals logo!

Curiously, Robert, your feelings about #315 parallel ye editor's almost exactly. There was a deliberate attempt to make it a "Day In The Life Of..." story, and we think that was the best part... and a necessary change of pace. In fact, we're planning a similar approach to the story after next month's Batman-Joker blockbuster.—PL

* * * * *

Dear Sir,

Who is "G"? I really liked his 40's style cover on #315!

Gary Thompson
3701 Roosevelt
Dearborn, MI 48124

The G encircled by a D is, of course, Dick Giordano—whose signature we thought well known by now.—PL

* * * * *

Dear Editor,

Let me start right up front—with the cover. Although I wouldn't want to see it every issue, I did like the white bat logo instead of the usual black. It fit in perfectly with Dick Giordano's great art; and as an attention getter, it worked great. (it got my attention, didn't it?)

And now moving inside—

I was not very impressed with the Kite-Man story. Bringing back some villians of decades past is a good idea, but let's not bring back those old gimmicks. I am referring to Batman's showing up riding a glider to battle Kite-Man. Batman had found only minutes before that he was up against Kite-Man, and was racing the clock to get to the scene of the crime to nab Kite-Man. But when he realized he wouldn't make it in time, I refuse to believe he went all the way back to the Batcave to get the hand-glider. Yeah, yeah, I know, you'll say it was in the trunk of the Batmobile. But my point is that he had this contraption at all. I felt I was suddenly reading a story out of the 50's or 60's, when Batman seemed to be able to produce any gimmick he needed, no matter how far-fetched. I just can't believe Batman had a hand-glider ready when he had only just learned he was to fight Kite-Man.

In this issue, I liked the sub-plots better—especially with Lucius Fox and the as yet unseen Gregorian Falstaff. I feel you've got a very good story in the works—coming soon, I hope?

And though the Selina Kyle subplot has been with us for the better part of a year, it still holds my interest. I still cannot decide whether Selina should revert to being Catwoman, or become Mrs. Bruce Wayne. Oh, well. Time will tell. Just don't let me go grey before you tell it.

Scott Slonaker
616 Meade Drive
Winchester, VA 22601

Batman will be meeting up with Gregorian Falstaff in #322, for better or worse. Or perhaps we should save that phrase for the revelations coming about Selina Kyle's life in that very same issue, when cat-crimes once again plague Gotham City? Either way, it's a safe bet that 1980 will be a busy year for the Batman.

But before the new year begins, Batman has to survive the Joker's birthday next month. The Clown Prince of Crime has declared a special holiday for the occasion, and is inviting everyone who ever got in his way to be a guest at the party—a very dead guest. Needless to say, our hero will be at the top of the invitation list. Be with us then, as regular writer Len Wein returns after a well-earned rest during this issue's Denny O'Neil thriller, and guest artists Walt Simonson and Dick Giordano make their reappearance while Irv takes his turn at the easy chair.—Paul Levitz